

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 IO-11 ISO-00 SCS-03 SS-15 NSC-05

H-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SCA-01 DPW-01 L-03 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

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P R 231131Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8953

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONGEN HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

JCRC SAMAE SAN

CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, VS

SUBJ: RETURN OF MARINE BODIES FROM VIET-NAM/STAFFDEL DE HAAN

REF: A) BANGKOK 3940 B) STATE 40430

SUMMARY: THE DENNEDY STAFFDEL'S VISIT TO SAIGON ACCOMPLISHED ITS LIMITED OBJECTIVE, THE REPATRIATION OF THE REMAINS OF THE TWO MARINES. THE STAFFDEL BELIEVES STRONGLY THAT THE VITNAMESE ACTION CALLS FOR AN AMERICAN RESPONSE. END SUMMARY.

1. AS THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED, STAFFERS DE HAAN AND TINKER OF THE KENNEDY SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES VISITED SAIGON FEBRUARY 22 TO TAKE CUSTODY OF THE BODIES OF THE TWO MARINES KILLED THERE LAST APRIL 29 (REF A). ON THEIR RETURN, THEY
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DESCRIBED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THEIR ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUT

STAY, WHICH WAS CONFINED TO THE MAIN TERMINAL BUILDING AT TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT.

2. DE HAAN AND TINKER SAID THE VISIT WAS RESTRICTED ALMOST ENTIRELY TO THE ACTUAL TURNOVER OF REMAINS. THEY HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT IT HAD BEEN VERY CAREFULLY ORCHESTRATED "AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS" IN VIET-NAM. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TRINH VAN ANH HEADED THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE SIDE OF APPROXIMATELY SEVEN PERSONS. ANH SIGNED THE RELEASE PAPERS IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD OF THE RSV OFFICE IN CHARGE OF SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING PERSONNEL. (COMMENT: NEITHER THEY NOR WE WERE PREVIOUSLY AWARE OF THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH AN OFFICE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. END COMMENT.) NO DRV OFFICIALS PARTICIPATED NOR WERE THERE ANY AMERICANS OR OTHER FOREIGNERS. SEVERAL VIETNAMESE DESCRIBED AS NEWSMEN WERE PRESENT.

3. ACCORDING TO DE HAAN AND TINKER, THERE WAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS OTHER QUESTIONS SUCH AS THE RELEASE OF AMERICANS OR REPATRIATION OF VIETNAMESE DURING THEIR VISIT, NOR WAS THERE ANYONE FROM THE ICRC OFFICE IN SAIGON TO WHOM THEY COULD PRESENT THE LIST OF AMERICANS. (REF B). (WE HAVE PROVIDED UNHCR HANOI REPRESENTATIVE DARRYL HAN WITH COPIES OF THE LIST.)

4. THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT, ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRIP WAS APPARENTLY A REMARK ANH MADE TO THE TWO AMERICANS THAT THEY WOULD BE WELCOME IN HANOI TO DISCUSS THE BROAD RANGE OF DGV-US CONCERNS, AN INVITATION THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD FIRST PASSED TO KENNEDY'S OFFICE LAST OCTOBER. THE TWO WILL INFORM SENATOR KENNEDY OF ANH'S COMMENT UPON THEIR RETURN TO WASHINGTON AND INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD HOPE TO TRAVEL TO HANOI VERY SOON. THEY MADE IT CLEAR TO THE PRESS THAT KENNEDY DOES NOT HIMSELF PLAN TO GO TO HANOI.

5. DE HAAN ALSO TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE FEBRUARY 22 REPATRIATION OF REMAINS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VIET-NAM. IN CONVERSATION WITH US, DE HAAN AND TINKER SAID THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT, WITH THIS LATEST RETURN OF REMAINS (ADDED TO THOSE TURNED OVER TO CODEL MONTGOMERY IN DECEMBER), THE VIETNAMESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT GESTURE WHICH DESERVES A U.S. RESPONSE. THEY INTEND TO EMPHASIZE THIS VIEW UPON THEIR RETURN HOME.

6. COMMENT: BOTH THE STAFFDEL AND THE UNHCR'S HAN THOUGHT THE BRIEF VISIT TO SAIGON HAD ACCOMPLISHED ITS LIMITED OBJECTIVE WELL. FROM OUR VANTAGEPOINT, THE UNHCR DESERVES CONSIDERABLE CREDIT IN MAKING THE NECESSARY-- AND OFTEN FRUSTRATING--

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE TRIP.
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